



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# AMERICA IN THE FRENCH MUSIC OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By LIONEL DE LA LAURENCIE

**I**T is a matter of common knowledge that the ties connecting France and America are of long standing, and it is pleasant to revert to the fact now that these ties have been strengthened in consequence of the world catastrophe which has definitely sealed the amity of two great nations meant to understand and esteem each other.

We would like, in this article, to trace in the midst of the various developments of seventeenth and eighteenth century French music, the manner in which this music has taken advantage of American elements. At times choreographic and dramatic music borrows dances and subject-matter for compositions from America, at others vocal and instrumental music employs American airs, or airs said to be American. For one is obliged to admit that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in general, paid but little attention to folk-lore of which, by-the-by, they were almost altogether ignorant, and in which they showed but little interest; though extremely avid of exotic affects and characteristic melodies. Hence, while it occurs that French drama, in staging scenes from America, endeavors to secure a kind of local color; and while it surrounds the foreign characters whom it presents with music intended to be representative of the characters in question, this does not preclude but little exactitude being displayed in the matter of transcription. For instance, the Indian savages are not pictured as they are, by the aid of their individual music; but rather as they are supposed to be, by means of a vague melodic and rhythmic documentation inspired by the tales of voyagers and missionaries. "In fact," M. Tiersot justly says, "how were the Europeans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to discover the meaning of music that differed so greatly from their own, when they themselves found it so difficult to put up with the slightest alteration of their own musical habits; regarding with astonishment the difference between Italian and

French music; the style of Rameau succeeding that of Lulli, etc."<sup>1</sup>

The developments of American exotism in older French music are lacking neither in objectivity nor in realism, and we only wish to draw attention to the reservations to which we have already alluded before progressing to a study of their principles.

\*       \*  
\*

America appears for the first time in the French music of the seventeenth century under the auspices of the dance, and in the frame-work of the court ballet, the *ballet de cour*. As is known, this form of diversion looked on exotism as one of its most powerful means of action, and it was one of the best liked. There were ethnographic and geographic ballets which introduced representatives of the various nations on the stage, and in this manner aroused the curiosity of the spectators by the colorful play of their costumes, and the picturesque singularity of their attitudes.

In the manner of costume the theorists of the ballet show themselves decidedly exigent: "The costumes for the ballet cannot be too handsome," declares Saint-Hubert; but he insists in particular, on the correctness of the costumes, on their being entirely appropriate to the persons represented. "Therefore, one should not so much dwell on the splendor of the dress as on its fitness, and its resemblance to whatever is being represented."<sup>2</sup>

This regard for exactitude naturally showed itself when recourse was had to local color. Hence Father Menestrier designates the costumes which the exotic personages introduced in the ballets should wear, "the various nations who have their own individual costume, which distinguish them. The Turk has his vest and turban; the Moor, his black color; the American, a dress of feathers."<sup>3</sup>

Hence, too, it is attired in the multicolored plumage of the Indians of the North and of the South, that the Americans make their appearance in the choreographic diversions of the seventeenth century.

Here a preliminary observation seems called for: the term Indian does not always convey a precise ethnographic significa-

<sup>1</sup>Julien Tiersot. *Notes d'Ethnographie Musicale. La Musique chez les peuples indigènes de l'Amérique du Nord. Recueil de la Société Internationale de Musique.* Jan.-Mars, 1910, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>St.-Hubert. *La manière de composer et faire répéter les ballets*, Paris, Fr. Targa, 1641. In 8vo. pp. 17, 18.

<sup>3</sup>Menestrier. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, 1682, p. 143.

tion since, in the literature of the court ballet, it is applied at one time to Asiatics and at another to Americans. Therefore, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, we will call Americans only such personages as are thus expressly qualified as being inhabitants of the New World.

The first seventeenth century ballet which alludes to Americans is the *Ballet de la Reine*, danced on Jan. 16, 1609, and whose first "entry," represented by the *Enfans sans soucy*, was entitled "The Americans." Then, in 1620, in the *Ballet de l'Amour de ce Temps* given that year, also by the *Enfants sans soucy*, a certain "Topinambou," addresses the following verses to the ladies:

Belles, je suis Topinambou,  
Venu d'une terre étrangère;  
J'ai quitté mon pays pour vous,  
Mes biens et ma famille entière  
Et, remply de sérénité,  
Je passois en cette cité.

Beauties, my name is Topinambou,  
I've come from a foreign, far countree;  
I've left my natal land for you,  
My goods and all my family;  
And, with my soul now quite at rest,  
I come to this town as your guest.

Strangely brought up, in the fashion of the time, Topinambou continues in a gallant strain, declares he is ready "to play the Cytherian game," and relies on his almost entire lack of costume as a means of overcoming the resistance of his charmers.<sup>1</sup>

With the *Grand Bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut* (The Grand Ball of the Dowager of Billebahaut), whose costuming and get-up were the work of René Bordier and l'Étoile, the part played by the Americans has become more important. This ballet was danced before the king, in the Louvre, during the month of February, 1626, and the court took part in the "American ballets," in which "Atabalipa, followed by peoples and costumes of America," figured.<sup>2</sup>

The personage in question is Atabalipa, king of Cuzco, in Peru, whom a troupe of Americans bear into the hall at the beginning of the first "entry." This individual, destined to achieve a long career in French lyric literature, is purely a figment of the imagination. The history of Peru knows only a certain

<sup>1</sup>Paul Lacroix. *Ballets et Mascarades de cour, de Henri III à Louis XIV* (1581-1652). Geneva, 1868, v. II, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>René Bordier. *Grand Bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut*, Paris, 1626, p. 3.

Atahualpa, a natural son of Huayna Capac who, after a struggle of four years against his brother Huascar, ended by getting the better of him and having himself proclaimed Inca in his place, shortly before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The origin of Atabalipa is in all likelihood to be found in the singular treatise of Adriano Banchieri, published in Venice, in 1599, *La Nobilità dell' Asino di Attabalippa dal Peru* of which a French translation was printed in Paris, in 1606: *La Noblesse, excellence et antianité de l'Asne. Traduit de l'italien du Seigneur Attabalipa* (Adriano Banchieri). Bordier was evidently acquainted with these works, hence the Atabalipa of the *Douairière de Billebahaut*.<sup>1</sup>

And how do these "Americans" act? Let us see what Bordier says: "Someone said," he tells us, "that these pleasant Americans go clad only in feathers; yet as to that, do not regret it overmuch for, since they go about in a frivolous dress, they easily forgive the frivolity of others."<sup>2</sup>

Incidentally, they defend themselves against the accusation of inconstancy. One among their number, M. Le Comte, recites the following lines:

Béautez, qui me voyez paroistre à cœur ouvert,  
Au rang des Inconstans et des plus infidelles,  
Encore que mon corps soit de plumes couvert,  
Mon amour n'a point d'aisles.

Beauties who see me here with heart laid bare,  
'Mid the most faithless and inconstant known,  
Though feathers covering my body I wear,  
My constant love no wings has grown.

The entry of the Americans soon gives rise to the appearance of a "Ballet of parrakeets." "The former," says Bordier, "have no sooner turned the soles of their feet to the audience, before a troop of parrakeets show their beaks at the gate of the theatre. Covered with a plumage of green, these parrakeets thus display their hopes of a more favorable reception." But, alas, they are playing with fire, for the indigenous huntsmen of their country enter on the scene, armed with the instruments they habitually use. And then Bordier goes on to describe to us this "species of music, whose sound amuses and whose noise astonishes them." The unfortunate parrakeets know not whether to listen or to fly. Some are caught in insidious nets which entangle them, the rest

<sup>1</sup>Henri Prunières. *Le Ballet de Cour en France*, 1913, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>*Grand Bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut*, p. 4.

cast themselves on the mirrors carried by their enemies, without a suspicion "that the cruel hand of the huntsman will seize them." This ballet of huntsmen and parrakeets is followed by one of androgyns, individuals among whom the Count d'Haricourt plays a part, and who as women, carry spindles; and as men, clubs, in order to show that they are able to spin on the one hand, and break heads on the other.

The music of the ballet of the *Douairière de Billebahaut* has, unfortunately, not been preserved. However, a curious design, at the Louvre, published by M. Henry Prunières, in his fine work on the *Ballet de la Cour en France*, gives us an idea of the sort of music which accompanied the entrance of the Americans. Behind a solemn llama, adorned with trappings, advanced a native beating gongs, and surrounded by a troop of bagpipe players. A certain number of American airs were already known in France at this time, since Father Mersenne, in his *Harmonie universelle* of 1636, offers us four specimens.<sup>1</sup>

Of these four airs the first, a *Chanson Canadoise* (Canada Song), whose title calls up memories of the first French explorers in Canada, Denys and Jacques Cartier, as well as of Roberval and Samuel Champlain, is certainly anything but a faithful transcription. The remaining three, on the contrary, which we give here, and which have already been reproduced by M. Tiersot in the article above cited, seem to be more valid.

They follow herewith:



Alluding to Jean Léri's voyage, Mersenne assures us that these are songs of the Topinambous, and that the words of the first have reference to a yellow bird, whose feathers "are used by them in making their bonnets, their robes and several other things." The words of the second song, extremely vehement, carry them away into a sort of "epilepsy." As to the third song, it is used as a lament for the dead, a funeral dirge. One cannot deny that these

<sup>1</sup>M. Mersenne. *Harmonie universelle*, Paris, 1636, Bk. 3. *Du Genres de la Musique*, II, p. 148.

three songs have a primitive and savage character, which testifies in favor of an exactness of notation at least relative. Yet it is quite evident that the musicians of the court ballets gave themselves but slight concern with regard to making use of melodies of the kind in presenting the Americans in their diversions. No doubt they preferred to support Mersenne's singular opinion, according to which "the diatonic being the most natural of all styles (modes), those peoples or races who have no musicians among them, sing diatonically."

Hence we may see, in the *Ballet de M. le Cardinal de Richelieu*, danced in 1641, the music of whose entries has been preserved in the valuable Philidor Collection at the Paris Conservatory, that the Americans take part in the dance (Entry 26), to the following theme:







second "air of the Americans," sung by the ballet, to instrumental accompaniment:



is neither more nor less than a *forlane*, a dance of Friouli, which Jean Baptiste Duval had described as far back as the month of May, 1609, and which the *Mercure galant* of April, 1683, praised to the skies.<sup>1</sup>

It seeks to deploy those effects of majestic pomp and congratulation with regard to the sovereign which were so dear to the heart of Lully, the superintendent of his royal music. Lully makes an appeal to the Americans of New France to glorify Louis XIV, nothing less; these Frenchmen of the trans-Atlantic are to celebrate the pacific virtues of a monarch who, nevertheless, loved war only too well; and they are to abandon themselves to the idyllic joys which peace regained holds forth, "a peace so charming," as the American chorus sings; while a coryphee declares firmly that the great king is feared "from end to end of the earth."<sup>2</sup> In addition, among the dances which were performed at the balls of Louis XIV, and which were collected in 1712 by the elder Philidor, ordinary of the king's music, there is one *La Jamaïque* (Jamaica), whose title had an American suggestion. The theme follows:<sup>3</sup>



Following Lully's example, Rameau did not neglect to introduce the Americans on the stage. Only, it is no longer the Canadians whom he bids dance, but the Americans of the South. *Les Indes galantes*, of 1735,<sup>4</sup> whose book was by Fuzelier, comprises,

<sup>1</sup>See J. Ecorcheville. *La Forlane*, S. I. M., April 1, 1914.

<sup>2</sup>*Temple de la Paix*, mss. of the Paris Conservatory, pp. 151, 1919.

<sup>3</sup>*Recueil de Danses*, par Philidor l'ainé (1712). Bib. nat. See Fol. 3555, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>*Trans. Note:* Combarieu calls *Les Indes galantes*, in 3 acts and a prologue, one of the type of heroic ballet already traditional; "in it one meets with Hebe, Love, Bellona, Osman-Pasha, the Incas of Peru, Savages, a dance of flowers, a Persian fête, Boreus, Zephyrs, etc."

beginning with its third performance, an entry, the second, of the "Incas of Peru." The scene disclosed: "a Peruvian desert, ending in an arid mountain, whose peak was crowned by the crater of a volcano, formed of calcined rocks, and covered with ashes.<sup>1</sup> And, as they innocently said at that time, in order to justify this deployment of local color, and the momentary abandonment of the sempiternal mythological and fairy landscape, the Peruvian volcano seemed "even more true to life than a fairy scene, and quite as well fitted to give rise to chromatic music of the symphonic order!" Hence the auditors might be at rest, since the chromatic factor would not be deprived of its rights. The entrance of the Incas introduced Peruvians in picturesque costume on the stage; but the costumes are picturesque along the somewhat arbitrary lines of eighteenth century taste. Among those making up the group we might mention: Phani, Palla, Huajcar; there was also a French officer, Damon, and a Spanish officer, Alvar, both of them very much taken with the lovely Zima. We will not dwell upon the celebrated scene of the adoration of the sun, with its famed chorus "Brilliant orb"; nor will we go into detail as regards "the earthquake," to the uproar of the volcano, which is adduced as a "sensational" example of Rameau's art as a tone-painter.<sup>2</sup>

We will call attention here, above all, to the famous "Air of the Savages" introduced by Rameau in his opera-ballet in March, 1736. This air has quite a history. In 1725, at the time that he was working at the spectacles of the *Foire St. Germain*, the musician had composed a song and a dance intended for the exhibition of the Carib savages who had been brought to Paris. It is this very "Air of the Savages" which appears in the collection of clavecin pieces published between 1727 and 1731 (*Nouvelles Suites de pièces de clavessin*), and which Rameau replaced in the *Indes galantes*. Its energetic, decided theme, as Rameau sees it, takes on a character of the most concise stylization, and is compactly developed in odd rhythmic gestures and beats. Yet it



was in no wise inspired by folk-lore, and its well-defined tonality

<sup>1</sup>*Livret des Indes galantes—Les Incas de Perou, 2<sup>e</sup> Entrée.*

<sup>2</sup>*Indes galantes* (Éd. Durand), p. 206. Cf. *Sentiments d'un harmophile*, p. 71.

and rhythmic firmness lead us to regard it without question as the own musical child of the composer of *Dardanus*. Nevertheless, Rameau took an interest in exotic music; in 1757, in the introduction of his *Nouvelles reflexions sur le principe sonore*, he assures us that he has seen all that Father Amiot of the Company of Jesus, for the space of sixteen years a missionary at Pekin, had found it possible to collect regarding Chinese music; and his heroic ballet of the *Paladins*, composed not long after, and first performed on Feb. 12, 1760, includes a "Chinese Air." At the same time, it was impossible that he should have known, in 1725, the particulars set down by the Jesuit Father de Charlevoix, in his histories of Santo Domingo and Paraguay, nor the same Jesuit father's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, all of them works, in the last analysis, decidedly deficient in information of a musical nature. On the other hand, he would have been able to read the *Histoire de la Conquête du Mexique*, by Don Antonio de Solis, of which a French translation appeared in 1691. Yet aside from some curious details regarding the dances of the Aztecs, and which describe a somewhat clumsy and elementary choreography which would adapt itself easily enough to the "Air of the Savages," Solis' work contains no more than a few lines devoted to Mexican music. He mentions "the flute players, and those who played certain conch-shells which produced a species of concerted music."<sup>1</sup>

It therefore follows that it must, in all likelihood, be conceded that the "Air of the Savages" sprang fully armed and quivering with barbaric energy from the head of Rameau. An anecdote ascribes a most amusing origin to this air. The *danseuse* Sallé, taking a pin, pricked a number of holes in a sheet of music-paper which Rameau had given her, after which the latter gave each hole, representing a note, its rhythmic value, and thus the "Air of the Savages" came into being.<sup>2</sup> However, the famous melody,

<sup>1</sup>*Loc. cit.*, pp. 289, 290. Solis speaks of wooden cymbals, varying in size and sonority, and not without "some sort of consonance." With regard to the dances of the Indians, with head-dresses of feathers and carrying feather scarves in their hands, see the section entitled: "The Great Temple of Mexico," p. 273.

*Trans. Note:* Lucien Biart, in his "The Aztecs, Their History, Manners and Customs" (trans. from the French by J. L. Garner, Chicago, 1887), mentions the *huehuetle*, "a wooden cylinder, three feet high, carved and ornamented with paintings, its top covered with the skin of a deer, which could be stretched or loosened at will, according as the players wished to produce deep or rumbling sounds. This drum was played by striking the head with the fingers, which required a certain amount of skill." The *teponastle*, another drum, made in varying sizes, "still in use in some towns . . . has something melancholy in its tones; and is audible at a great distance." A substitute for the European castanet was the *axacaxtli*, "a sort of gourd pierced with holes, which was filled with small stones." It constituted an enormous rattle, and was shaken in time with the playing of the other instruments.

<sup>2</sup>Anecdote reported by M. Arthur Pougin, in the introduction to the *Indes galantes* in the Michaelis edition.

which in the *Indes galantes* accompanies the duo *Fonts paisibles*, achieved a decided success, in spite of the satires which the *Almanach du Diable* (The Devil's Almanack) directed against Rameau in 1737. Though Desfontaines raged against the music of the *Indes galantes*, and though he declared that "Nature had no part at all in it"; though he said of the score: "Nothing could be more rough and uneven, nothing less polished; it is a road which one cannot walk without stumbling,"<sup>1</sup> other critics allowed themselves to be seduced by its exotic character, and the *Pour et Contre* (For and Against), came to the conclusion that the music "was genuinely Indian."<sup>2</sup> Rameau himself showed that he was well satisfied with his "Air of the Savages," of 1725, in his letter of October 25, 1727 to Houdard de la Motte. It proves how much he thought of this dance, when he says: "It rests entirely with you to come and hear how I have characterized the song and dances of the savages who appeared at the *Théâtre Italien* a year or so ago."

"The Air of the Savages" had a long life and many imitators. Not alone did Balbastro transfer it to the organ, at the *Concert spirituel*, in 1755; but one also finds an arrangement of it for two transverse flutes, violins or violas in the second *Recueil de pièces, petits airs, etc., du flutiste*, by Michel Blavet. On the other hand, the violinists, the younger Abbé and Tarade, supplied it with variations, and Gardel employs it in his first ballet: *Le Premier navigateur ou le pouvoir de l'amour* (July 25, 1785). Finally, Dalayrac made use of the "Air of the Savages" in the prologue to his comic opera *Azémia ou les Sauvages*, words by Lachabeausière, given *aux Italiens* on May 2, 1787.<sup>3</sup> The *Mercure* of the day regards this interpolation in the mimic and descriptive symphony with which the work opens, as an act of homage to Rameau's greatness.

In the meantime, instrumental music furnished some specimens of American airs. The literature of the bass viol supplies us with the following example, which we borrow from an mss. collection which leans largely on pieces by Marais senior, Roland Marais, Forqueray, de Caix and others. This piece is entitled *L'Amériguaine*:<sup>4</sup>





<sup>1</sup>*Observations sur les écrits modernes*, II, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>*Le Pour et le Contre*, VII, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>The *Air des Sauvages* appears in the bass of the *Allegro moderato* of the Prologue.

<sup>4</sup>*Recueil de pièces de violle avec la Basse tiré des meilleurs auteurs*. Bib. nat. See F. 6296, pp. 144, 145.

A little further on we find the succeeding passage, whose repeated figurations with a rhythm of  or  are not without a certain analogy to those frequently encountered in Indian melodies:



We might mention in particular, the "Fourth Harvest Song of the Iroquois" (Baker), various numbers of the Wa-Wan Press (Miss Fletcher), etc.<sup>1</sup>

The famous violinist J. P. Guignon, published about 1746, his *Nouvelles Variations de divers airs et les Folies d'Espagne*, in which we meet with an "American Air,"



which is carried out in several variations, of which the second is in double-stops, and the third secures a species of bag-pipe effect, with a pedal-point on the tonic D, so that we have an American tune disguised in gallant shepherd style. Among viola airs we find other American remembrances; for instance one which appears in two collections<sup>2</sup> is called *Le Mississippi*.



\*       \*

\*

It is at this point that we should call attention to *le Huron*, comic opera in two acts by Grétry, with text by Marmontel. *Le Huron* was performed for the first time at the *Théâtre Italien*, on August 20, 1768. To speak the truth, the music of this score does not bear witness of any particularly American tendency; it confines itself to seconding and supporting the moral of the libretto inspired by Voltaire's little romance known as *l'Ingénu* which appeared in 1767.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Tiersot. Loc. cit. p. 159 and 181.

<sup>2</sup>*Recueil de contredanses transposées pour la vielle*. Bib. nat., F. 3643, p. 67 and *Recueil manuscrit* No. 2547. Bib. de l'Arsenal, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>*Trans. Note*: According to David Friedrich Strauss ("Voltaire," Leipsic, 1872), *l'Ingénu*, "the child of nature," is the best of Voltaire's romances, since, among the more extended tales, it is only one whose characters and incidents awaken genuine human sympathy and interest. Aside from being a work that awakens a real emotional reaction, it offers an admirable picture of the *mores* of the later half of the age of Louis XIV, in which time it plays.

In the shape of a young Huron, induced by his curiosity to visit Europe, Voltaire and, following him, Marmontel, have devoted themselves to a study of the ingenuous mind of the savage suddenly brought into contact with our pretended civilization, which gives rise to a number of adventures which, in the opinion of Grimm, throw into relief the good sense of the "child of nature," a good sense most alarming to his devout Aunt de Kerkabon.<sup>1</sup>

*Le Huron* scored a great success, thanks to Grétry's music. The latter tells in his *Essais* how, with the aid of Marmontel, he composed his comic opera in six months' time. He describes the fear he suffered with regard to the subject-matter of his score, a fear which vanished with its first performance, dissipated by the success achieved by the charming Huron Caillot, who "in savage dress," sang the air: "In which canton is Huron-land?" most delightfully, and by Mme. Larsette, entrusted with the part of Mlle. St. Yves. Still, we repeat, *le Huron* is no more than a score with a psychological trend, and which we only cite because its leading figure is an American.

We have now reached the moment when American history is about to write one of its most glorious pages, that of the Independence of the United States. It is a matter of knowledge that the revolutionary movement, though general in character, had its focus in the province of Massachusetts, and above all, in the city of Boston, which ever since the December of 1773 had revolted against the ill-omened fiscal policy of Great Britain. The proclamation of the Independence of the United States of America, on July 4, 1776, was destined to find its repercussion in French music. The *Mercure* of January, 1780, announced some *Divertissements* for clavecin or forte-piano, containing the "Echoes of Boston," and the victory gained in a naval combat by a frigate over a group of privateers. These *Divertissements* were dedicated to the Duke of Angoulême, Grand Prior of France, by Michel Corrette, who was the organist of the prince in question.<sup>2</sup>

The title "Echoes of Boston" is characteristic. The *Diversissement* is one written in three parts, of which the slow movement in G major, an *Andante* in 3/8 time, is written in the dominant tonality, and is called "The Murmur of Waters." The beginning of the initial *Allegro* follows:



<sup>1</sup>*Correspondance littéraire*, vol. III, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup>*Mercure*, Jan. 1780, p. 190.

The "Echoes of Boston" ends with a rapid movement in 6/8 time, which has been baptized: "The Flight of the English."

As to the naval battle which accompanies the *Divertissement*, it has been developed in accordance with the esthetic laws of the picturesque and descriptive which govern its type, and is inspired by events transpiring along the American coast-line. Corette even invents a sign to indicate how the "cannon-shots" are to be executed on the keyboard. We quote his description, though it is rather naïve: "Strike all the bass keys with the palm of the hand, to imitate the firing of the cannon—twenty-four pounders."

And while our instrumental music draws inspiration from the events taking place on the other side of the ocean, our dramatic music, for its part, celebrates the nation which is about to gain its liberty.

On November 18, 1779, Gardel presented at the *Opéra* a three-act ballet, *Mirsa*, whose action takes place in America. *Mirsa* scored a brilliant success, and Castil-Blaze, followed by Choquet<sup>1</sup> sees in this number an occasional piece: "they were fighting in America," writes Castil-Blaze, "we were the allies of the *insurgents* commanded by Washington; and the English were being defeated in every battle." Théodore de Lajarte has had no trouble in proving that the interpretation of *Mirsa* given by Castil-Blaze, does not in any way correspond with the facts. The long description of the ballet given in the *Mercure* of November, 1779, and a study of the text-book of *Mirsa* prove that nowhere is there any question of battles, "in which the English succumb." The ballet develops, however, a most sympathetic Franco-American atmosphere. It is a little pantomimic drama, whose plot does not lack variety, despite its simple nature, nor even emotion. *Mirsa* is the daughter of Mondor, governor of an American isle. She loves the handsome French colonel, Lindor; but their loves are troubled by the rivalry of a pirate. In the first act, so the *Mercure* reports, one laughs; in the second, one experiences lively emotion; in the third, "one is in turn divided between admiration and joy."

The third act is filled with the festivities celebrating the union of *Mirsa* and Lindor. These festivities take place on a vast esplanade lying in front of one of the terraces of Mondor's garden, and in the presence of the entire family, "surrounded by a crowd of Americans, Creoles and Negroes."

<sup>1</sup>Castil-Blaze. *Théâtres lyriques de Paris*, I, pp. 402, 403. G. Choquet. *Histoire de la musique dramatique en France*, p. 362.

First of all we have a brilliant military parade. Lindor's regiment manœuvres and defiles beneath its colonel's eyes, and a corps of Americans then arrives to draw up facing the French regiment. The governor then has both detachments go through a sham battle, and drums beat the assembly, to the colors, and a "Boston March" as well, whose first measure we quote herewith:<sup>1</sup>



After these military exercises, Mondor proceeds to the marriage of his daughter and Lindor, a warrior nuptial, celebrated to the sound of brass instruments. American officers and American ladies begin to dance, and to borrow the expression of the *Mercur*, "celebrate the festivities with the dances in vogue in their country."

The military parade was well conducted by M. Faydieu, sergeant in the regiment of the Guards. Two airs which above all seem to be connected with America, and in particular with the part played by the Chevalier d'Estaign in the War of Independence (October, 1781), are preserved in a collection of airs in the National Library, and bear the titles: *La Destain* and *Le Retour Destain* ("d'Estaign's Return").<sup>2</sup>

In the lyric tragedy *Pizarre*, or the Conquest of Peru, performed for the first time at the Royal Academy of Music on May 3, 1785, we see reappear Atabalipa, king of Peru, already laid under contribution on various occasions by French music. The scene is laid in Peru. Candeille had written the music of this opera, whose text was by Duplessis, and which had but a mediocre success, in spite of a brilliant cast: Lais taking the part of *Pizarro*, and the *Inca Atabalipa*, now Atabaliba, being played by Chéron. Mlle. Gavaudan the younger sang the rôle of *Alzire*, while La Guimard and Vestris danced.

In Act one we once more meet with the scene of the adoration of the sun which Rameau had already treated musically. The stage represents the frontal of the temple of the sun, whose ruins still exist in Cuzco, and without delay exotic effects are exploited. A march for the entry of Atabaliba, and his suite resounds: "this march," the book explains, "begins very softly, and increases gradually in power; there are negroes with kettledrums and others with small drums after the fashion of the country."

<sup>1</sup>*Mirsa*. Act III, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bib. nat. See F. 4865, fos. 55 and 57.



This march is dominated by a commonplace melody played by the piccolo, local color being supplied only by the instrumentation. Then the temple doors open and the high priest issues forth, followed by the young virgins dedicated to the worship of the sun. Now comes a new march of a more pronouncedly exotic character than its predecessor, with abrupt calls:



The high priest then sings the air: "Beneficent divinity," which is taken up by a five-part chorus; then follows an entry, *Allegro molto*, whose minor character is adorned with a langourous theme, embellished by ornamental connecting-links, and supported by the orchestral percussives.

Following this, the Peruvians dance, heavily, to a movement in 6/8 time, where the repeated oscillation on a strong accent does not fail to recall the insistence of accent shown in the first part of the "Dance for the Invocation of the Spirit," collected by Doctor Boas.<sup>1</sup> Yet here the rhythmic stress repeats a fourth seven times in succession, while in the dance of the Peruvians, the recurring stress goes on while broadening out from a fourth to a sixth. At the same time this far-away resemblance is lessened by the fact that the "Dance for the Invocation of the Spirit" is a dance of Northern America.

According to the *Mercure*, the action of the piece gave rise to criticisms which were softened and equalized by its spectacular pomp and the variety of its tableaux, "in accordance with the habits and the costumes of the peoples represented on the stage."<sup>2</sup> The march of the Inca gave pleasure, and it was admitted that his character had been "well expressed"; also, the dance airs seemed to be good of their kind; but in general—and we cannot help but agree with this opinion—the music was accused of lacking originality.<sup>3</sup>

Atabalipa makes a fresh appearance in Méhul's *Cora*, unsuccessfully given at the *Opéra* on February 11, 1791. Only, on this occasion the name of the Peruvian sovereign was shortened by eliding the syllable, and he became quite simply *Atalipa*.<sup>4</sup> Once more we meet with him in the temple of the sun and the Peruvian buildings which form the stage-setting for the first

<sup>1</sup>J. Tiersot. Loc. cit., p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>*Mercure*, May 14, 1785, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>*Mercure*, May 21, 1785, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>Lais played the part of *Atalipa*, and Quito was the scene of action.

act; and again we witness the festival of the god of light, and *Cora*, the heroine of the piece, is proclaimed the chosen of the godhead. She must take an oath of fidelity to the sun; but the unfortunate girl loves the Spaniard *Alonzo*, which fact permits the development of tragic permutations, in the course of which appears a certain *Hascar*, who recalls the *Huascar* of the *Indes galantes*.

Of Méhul's music we will cite the invocation of the priests of the sun (Act III):



in which the composer has evidently tried only to secure dramatic effect, without giving a single thought to local color; while Rameau confides his Invocation to the Sun, "Brilliant orb," to an ascending theme written in sixths, and seems to conform to the account given by the Jesuit Father de las Casas, in the sixteenth century, of the ceremonial of the sun worship, in which this cleric shows us the Inca king leading the chant in honor of the sun with sovereign authority—a song which continues to ascend in degree and measure, just as the planet itself rises above the horizon.<sup>1</sup> And this ascensional character is exactly that given by Rameau to his invocation.

Nor are we done, as yet, with the Incas and the ceremonials of their cult. The publication, in 1788, of Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's immortal eclogue *Paul et Virginie*, as a natural consequence focusses the attention of dramatic composers on another aspect of American music, on American negro music. All authors agree in recognizing that the negro has remarkable musical aptitudes. The negroes of Louisiana speak a kind of French jargon at once childish and touching, a dialect associated with melodies whose tenderness and emotional depth cannot be denied. Between the years 1790 and 1795 negro airs begin to make their appearance in musical compositions, and we see Muzio Clementi interpolate in Sonata I of his Op. xxix a charming and caressing *Arietta alla negra*, designating it *Andante innocento*, a descriptive phrase which underlines its childlike ingenuousness of character.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>*De las antiguas gentes del Peru* (Concerning the Ancient Peoples of Peru), por el padre F. B. de Las Casas. Reprinted, Madrid, 1892, pp. 93, 94.

<sup>2</sup>This theme is then developed in the form of variations.

In writing his *Paul et Virginie*, whose first performance took place at the *Comédie italienne* on January 15, 1791, and whose libretto follows—at some distance—Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's romance, Rodolphe Kreutzer has not failed to introduce negro airs in his score. There is in Scene 1, Act I, a little song sung by *Virginie* to *Paul*, a song which the negro *Dominique* has taught her:



And in Scene 6 of the same Act, there is a chorus: *Petite blancs bien doux, attendez-nous* ("Little whites so kind, wait for us").



The negroes construct a litter of boughs on which they carry *Virginie* while they sing:



When three years later, the subject of *Paul et Virginie* was again taken up, this time by Lesueur, aided by Dubreuil with regard to the text, Lesueur does not seem to have made the effort displayed by his predecessor to give his tunes a folk-lore impress.<sup>1</sup>

Once again we behold the adoration of the sun, which is now introduced, however, in the guise of a *hors d'œuvre*. And this point did not escape the attention of the contemporary press. "The composer of *Paul et Virginie*," says the *Journal de Paris* on Jan. 17, 1794, "has had recourse to an episode foreign to his story in order to extend the latter, one which in our opinion is

<sup>1</sup>*Paul et Virginie*, Comedy in Three Acts, was presented at the *Théâtre de la rue Feydeau*, the 25th Nivôse of the Year II.

hurtful to the principle end in view." The "Indian Savages" sing a hymn, noble in character, to the rising sun, with great cries of appeal carried along on a single note. In the second act there is also a chorus: "To the god of light," enwrapped with an atmosphere of sonority, where the *pizzicati* of the strings sparkle while flutes sing:



Lesueur's *Paul et Virginie* is the last lyric work of the eighteenth century whose scene of action is laid in America. Thus, as we have said at the beginning of our article, the older music of France has borrowed actually but little from American folk-lore, and it has hardly brought local color into play except through the medium of the spectacular. Notwithstanding, it seems of interest to recall that four of the greatest of French musicians, Lully, Rameau, Méhul and Lesueur, have treated American subjects, and have taken pains to characterize the indigenes of America by means of typical themes or an appropriate instrumentation.

(Translated by Frederick H. Martens)